

Dear Chairs Currey and McCrory, Vice Chairs Winfield and Leeper, Ranking Members McCarty and Berthel, and Members of the Education Committee:

My name is Jasmine Garica and I am a resident of New Haven. I'm writing to communicate my strong support for **S.B. 1095 - An Act Concerning School Resource Officers**. This bill would publicly outline the duties of school resource officers as well as enable school counselors, psychologists, and social workers to serve as School Resource Officers. Connecticut invests heavily in officers who then police schools, and these SROs can promote a culture of hostility, especially against minority students, and breach their codes of conduct. This legislation ensures they have a clearly defined role, which increases accountability and enables options for students to get treatment when they need it.

Students need a culture of care and respect, not violence and punishment. By ensuring School Resource Officers go through training specifically related to social-emotional learning and restorative practices, students can learn in an environment where they feel comfortable. And when something goes wrong, SROs can be held accountable for their actions.

The resources available to students are incredibly limited. We have seen alone how the pandemic can affect students emotionally and mentally. This is why the members of the community in positions to assist students and keep them safe require the best training. As a student who has attended public schools, I am aware that situations such as fights or emotionally provoking events occur in schools. But rather than punishment or improper treatment, these individuals who face hardships in their youth need strong support from the people in their environment. This bill does just that, to ensure that our students are in the best hands of the people meant to protect them.

In conclusion, I urge you to help our schools fulfill their responsibility to better the students who attend. This is only possible when SROs have a clear, defined role, one which they cannot abuse. I ask you to favorably vote this bill out of the Education Committee so that students can access the support they need.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Jasmine Garcia
New Haven, CT